Automotive Answers

Gov't And Industry Teaming Up To Save Teen Drivers

Percentage of Fatal Crashes by Characteristic, 1999

Driver Age	16	17-19	20-49
Driver Error	82	75	63
Speeding	34	31	22
3+ Occupants	32	25	18
Single Vehicle	40	37	30
Drivers Killed w/0.01+ BAC	13	33	49
Female Driver	37	29	30

(NAPSA)—Teenagers usually perceive a driver's license as a ticket to freedom. It's momentous for parents, too. Though they often are aware of the high crash risks associated with teen drivers, they're relieved not to have to chauffeur their children around anymore.

Of the 187.2 million licensed drivers in 1999, 12.7 million (6.8 percent) were between the ages of 15 and 20. Crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens, and account for more than one-third of all deaths of 16 to 18 year olds. As shown by the chart, the crash problem is worse among 16 year olds, who have the most limited driving experience and an immaturity that often results in risk-taking behind the wheel.

To combat this ongoing national tragedy, the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has joined forces with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and other safety organizations to give parents some help training their teenage drivers. One product of the joint effort with the IIHS is a brochure entitled "Beginning Teenage Drivers."

This publication describes the characteristics of teenage drivers' crashes, provides hints and tips for parents training a young driver, offers a brief explanation of Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL), and presents two profiles of teenagers who lost their lives in car crashes.

The publication also discusses how parents are role models for their teen drivers; how parents must establish rules for a driving teenager; the importance of restricting night driving; choosing a vehicle based on safety, not image; and how supervised practice should be spread over at least six months.

GDL is a new licensing system that requires young novice drivers to graduate through three licensing phases while complying with safety requirements and restrictions that limit teen passengers, restrict night driving, establish zero tolerance for alcohol, and require a specific amount of supervised practice during the initial phase. Evaluations of GDL systems have shown positive results in reducing the crashes of novice drivers (up to 37 percent).

For more information on this and other aspects of highway safety, visit the NHTSA Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov and the IIHS Web site at www.highwaysafety.org. To request a copy of "Beginning Teenage Drivers," write to The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 7th Street SW, Mail Stop NTS-32, Attn: Sean McLaurin, Washington, DC 20590.